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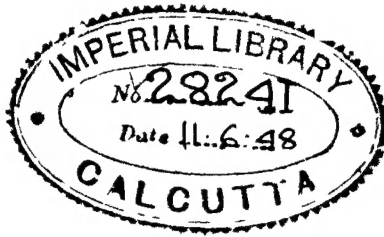
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MY DEDICATION TO GURUDEVA TAGORE

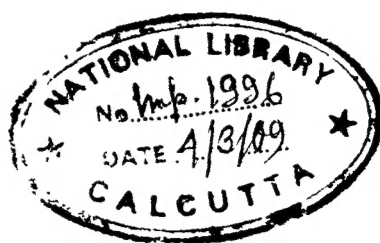
BY
TAN YUN-SHAN



THE SINO-INDIAN CULTURAL SOCIETY
CHUNGKING AND SANTINIKETAN

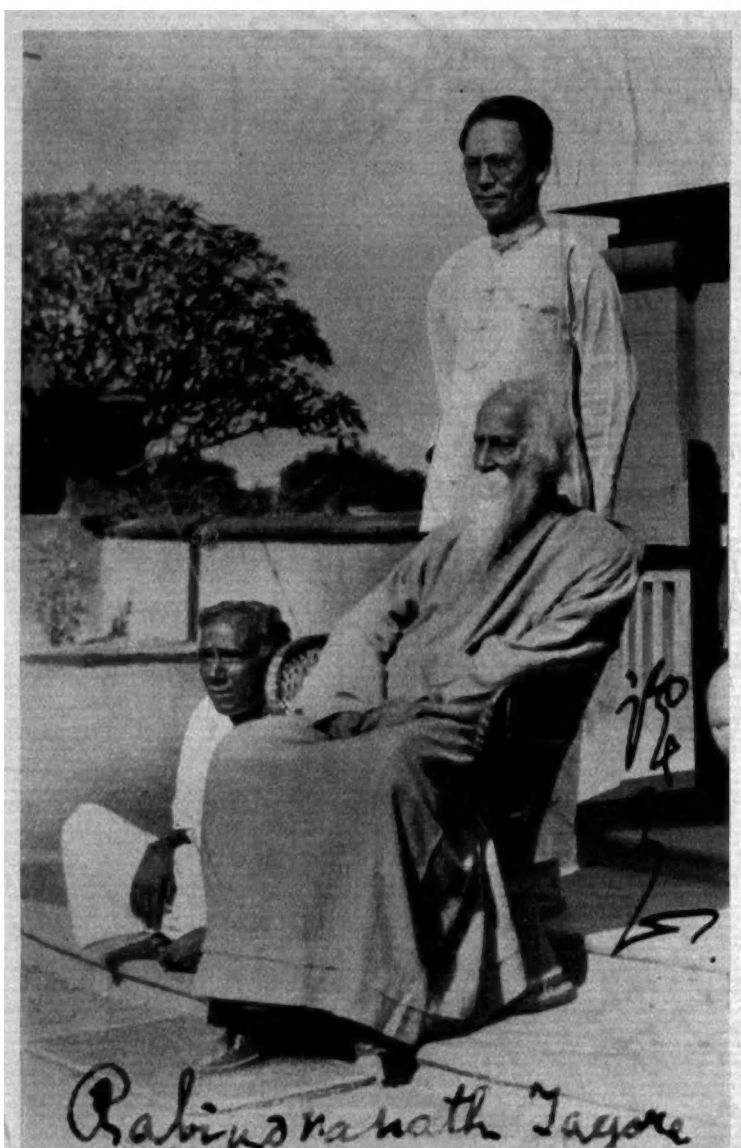
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Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore and
Prof. Tan Yun-Shan (Standing)

MY DEDICATION TO GURUDEVA TAGORE

(Written on the First Anniversary of his Death)

আজকে বিকালে শুনতে পেলাম বন্ধু বললে, গুরুদেব মারা
গেছেন ! আমরা শুনতে পেলাম । তখন সবাই কাঁদতে লাগল ।

7-8-1941

Today afternoon I heard my friend say 'Guru-
deva is dead.' We all heard it. Then everybody began
to weep.

7-8-1941

...

আজকে আমার ইস্কুল ছুটির দিন । আমি বাড়িতে একটা
কবিতা লিখেছি—

‘গুরুদেব, গুরুদেব, আমাদের গুরুদেব ।

আপনি কোথায় গেছেন ?

গুরুদেব, গুরুদেব, আপনি সত্যি কোরে মোরেছেন ?

গুরুদেব, গুরুদেব, আপনি কেন শান্তিনিকেতন আসছেন না ?

আপনি হচ্ছেন শান্তিনিকেতনের মা ।’

8-8-1941

Today is a holiday. I have no school. I have
written a poem while in my house :—

‘Gurudeva, Gurudeva, Oh, our Gurudeva !

Are you really dead ?

Gurudeva, Gurudeva !

Why are you not come back to Santiniketan ?

You are the Mother of Santiniketan.'

8-8-1941

..

The above two extracts in Bengali are taken from a childish diary of my seven year old son, Tan Lee, studying in the School Department of Visva-Bharati, together with a literal English translation. He wrote these words on the evening of the day when our Gurudeva Tagore passed away in Calcutta and after the sad news had reached Santiniketan that very afternoon, and in the evening of next day. The Bengali is entirely his own. No change or correction or improvement has been attempted.

Why should I quote these childish words here ? Because they express the real, true and spontaneous feeling, sentiment and emotion not only of the children but of all the inmates of Santiniketan, on that occasion, in a very simple, pure and natural way which we grown-up people, at least myself, cannot express better.

Now, the beloved and revered Gurudeva has left us for one full year already. Our feeling, our sentiment and our emotion still remain unchanged as expressed in the child's diary. Of course, we all know that his spirit will always remain with us and that he has bequeathed to us a great legacy, the Visva-Bharati, together with a sublime responsibility to carry on its work, to maintain and to develop its activities. We also understand that the physical death of a man is nothing

but a natural consequence of human life. All men living in this world have to die. We have also read many philosophical theories and heard many stories about the nature of life and death.

Let me relate here two famous stories, one Indian and one Chinese :

When Bhagavan Buddha was passing away, surrounded by his disciples, in the Twin Sal Grove at Kusinagara, he gave his disciples the last preaching. When he finished, he inquired of his disciples whether they had any doubts or questions in their mind. If they had any they should ask him immediately. One of the disciples named Aniruddha, said to the Bhagavan : “Your disciples have no doubts about the doctrine, but feel grief at seeing you passing away and are sad to think that the Bhagavan is leaving them so soon !” Then Lord Buddha said to them : “O, you Bhikshus, you should not feel any grief. Even if I lived in this world for a Kalpa, I shall have to die one day. There cannot be only meeting and no departure. You have all the Dharmas to benefit yourselves as well as others. If I lived longer, there will be no more good.” And he continued : “You should all know that the world is impermanent. Where there is meeting there is parting. Don’t grieve. Worldly existence is like this. You should only make an effort to get emancipation. Use the light of wisdom to destroy the darkness of ignorance. The world is indeed tender and there is nothing stable in it. Now I am getting rid of it as if I am getting rid of a bad disease. This (body) is an evil thing, falsely named the body, which should be cast

away. It (the body) is plunged into a vast sea of Old Age, Sickness, Birth and Death. If a wise man can get rid of it, it is as if he would kill the 'Robber Hatred'. Why should we not be happy ?" (Sutra of Last Teaching bequeathed by Buddha Nanjio No. 122.)

Chuang-Tzu was a great philosopher, next only to Lao-Tzu of the Tao School of Chinese philosophy. When his wife died and his friend Hui-Tsu came to condole with him, he himself was just squatting down on the ground, beating a drum, and singing. Seeing this, Hui-Tzu said to him : "A person lived with you for such a long time and died in your old age. No tears would be bad enough for you, yet you are beating a drum and singing. Is it not too much ?" Chuang-Tzu said : "No. If this were her first death, then how can I alone have no grief ? But tracing the origin, there was originally no birth. Not only there was no birth, but also there was originally no form. Again, there was not only no form, there was originally no breath. It was mixed in an indistinct state and changed into breath. Breath changed into form and form changed into birth. Now it has again changed into death. This thing is just going on with the process of the Spring, Autumn, Winter and Summer of the year. Now, a person is restfully sleeping in the great house of Nature and if I wail bitterly, I thought it would be misunderstanding life. Therefore I cease to weep." (Chuang-Tzu, Chapter XVIII.)

Stories and sayings like these are numerous in Chinese. There is no need to relate or quote any more. But our emotion, our feeling and our sentiment for the

bereavement of our beloved and revered Gurudeva could not be checked in any way. This is a fact and this is but human.

When I got the alarming news about Gurudeva's condition at noon, on the 6th August 1942, I immediately started from Santiniketan for Calcutta to see him. I reached Jorasanko, his Calcutta residence, in the evening of the same day. When I entered his room, I saw him lying on his sick bed, breathing like a wounded lion, but in a state of unconsciousness. This very sight struck me so much that I could hardly bear it. I offered my deepest pranam to him and sat down at his feet for about two hours. I prayed again and again to the Supreme Being as well as to himself to remain in this world at least for a few years more. I chanted several mantras and recited several sutras according to the Buddhist way. Later on, my friend Sri Krishna Kripalani, Gurudeva's grandson-in-law, took me to the dining room and asked me to eat something. He again took me to a bed room and gave me his own bed to sleep. But I could neither eat nor sleep that night. The inmates were watching and attending on Gurudeva by turn. I asked one of them if I could do any service and he told me that if needed he would call me.

The next morning I saw Gurudeva several times in the sick room. His condition had undergone no change. But his beautiful and majestic face was shining as usual and a divine and lion-like life was still pervading and prevailing in his body. At about nine o'clock, some doctors came to examine him and gave him some injections. I asked a friend what was the

result of the doctor's examination and injection ? He told me that there was some hope. I was greatly relieved and quickly went out to post some letters which I had written at Santiniketan on the previous day and had not posted yet, and sent two telegrams, one to the Generalissimo and another to a friend in China, informing them about the condition of Gurudeva's illness. When I finished my work outside and took my friend Mr. Chiu back to Jorasanko, we found the house and its surroundings crowded with thousands of people. Alas ! Gurudeva had already expired. We could hardly get inside the house. I asked one friend, was it possible to get some flowers ? He said, 'Impossible'. Fortunately I had a string of amber beads with me, and I took it off from my left wrist and put it into Gurudeva's right hand, and did my worship. Oh ! how could I think that that was the last offering and homage I offered to his person.

According to Hindu custom, the cremation ceremony should take place as soon as possible and it was arranged at the Nimtala Ghat, Calcutta. Immediately after the body was carried out, I went with my friend to the markets to purchase flowers to be offered at the cremation ceremony at Nimtala, but could not get any. All the flower markets nearby had already exhausted their stock, owing to the great demand on that occasion. At last we could only get two wreathes in the whole New Market. I took them with my friend to Nimtala. The sad news had already spread all over the city of Calcutta like wild fire. Millions of people, men and women, aged and young, came out

of their houses, filled up all the roads, streets and lanes, proceeding either to Jorasanko or to Nimtala to pay their last homage to the world-honoured and beloved poet-saint. My friend and I again had managed with great difficulty to reach the Nimtala Ghat and entered into it. I offered the two wreathes at the cremation ceremony, one on behalf of the Sino-Indian Cultural Society in China and another on behalf of Generalissimo Chiang Kai-Shek, President Tai Chi-Tao, President of the Examination Yuan of the National Government of China, Dr. H. H. Kung, Vice-President of the Executive Yuan of the National Government of China, Mr. Chen Li-Fu, Minister of Education of China, and Dr. Chu Chia-Hua, President of the Academia Sinica ; for they are great friends and admirers of Gurudeva.

That day's impression still remain very fresh and vivid and will ever so remain in my mind. My own father died when I was only six years old. I can remember very little of the sight of my father's death now. But the whole sight of Gurudeva's death will be ever in my memory. Anything else may be forgotten, but the impression of that day never will. O ! Could I only see the beautiful, majestic and sublime appearance of the beloved and revered Gurudeva again !

When Gurudeva was living at Santiniketan, all the inmates used to see him almost every day in the evening. Whenever I saw him, I always felt a kind of divine light mingled with love, mercy, bliss and joy, pouring out from him upon me. Visitors from all over the world indulged in putting him all kinds of questions, requesting him to do all kinds of things and asking

from him all kinds of favours. He very seldom refused or rejected any one of them. However, the case was quite different with me. During my long contact of nearly fifteen years with him, I never put any question to him or asked him any thing. Whenever I saw him, I always almost forgot everything, either bitter or sweet, happy or unhappy, good or bad. I really could not and did not like to put him any question or to request him to do anything for me. But he, would himself, sometimes put to me very interesting questions. For instance, once he asked me how, in my opinion, different peoples of different nations viewed things of beauty. I could hardly give an adequate reply, but referred to the great Chinese sage, Mencius saying : "All men's mouths agree in having the same relishes ; all men's ears agree in enjoying the same sounds ; all men's eyes agree in recognizing the same beauty." He smiled and said : "No, it is not always so. The young Chinese poet Susima (Tse-Mon Hsu) who came here, you know, who was quite a handsome person. I asked our girls if they appreciated his beauty. All of them said 'no'." I interrupted : "Gurudeva, you may not believe your girls more than the Chinese sage. The girls might have felt shy to tell you that they appreciated the beauty of a young Chinese poet." Then all of us laughed. Now, Gurudeva is no more. It is quite strange that I now seem to have many questions to ask him and many things to request him. Alas, how can I do it any more !

Gurudeva's love for China and for the Chinese people and Chinese culture was indeed very great and

very profound. I can quite safely say without any exaggeration that he loved China as much as he loved his own country, India. He loved the Chinese as his own people and Chinese culture, as much as Indian culture. His knowledge and understanding of China and the Chinese culture and people was also equally profound and great as his love. I found in the modern world two great savants who knew China and her people and culture best : one was Gurudeva, another is Bertrand Russell. But after all Russell is a Westerner and Gurudeva was an Easterner. A Westerner's comprehension of an old eastern country like China and her people and culture anyhow cannot be so deep, so intense, real and genuine as that of an Easterner. Gurudeva understood China and the Chinese civilization in certain respects even better than we Chinese ourselves. Sometimes he expressed views about China which we Chinese ourselves cannot express so well. For example, when I took leave of him before returning to China in 1934, he said to me half jokingly and half seriously : "Don't forget my Chinese tea. And tell your young people that they should not blindly imitate the U. S. S. R. You have your own communism. You know, I have a great admiration for the U. S. S. R. But if you imitate blindly you will get no benefit but disadvantage." I was deeply moved by these words and heartily thanked him and conveyed them to my people. No other man could give better advice in such few words which were so adequate and precise, so simple and clear and so sincere and earnest. They expressed the very truth and the real facts about

China at that time. On another occasion, when I saw him one evening, the book "My Country and My People" by Dr. Lin Yu-Tang was lying by his side. He immediately pointed it out to me and said : "This is a very fine and interesting book but you may not like it." I replied : "I also like it. But it does not interpret the whole and the real aspect of my country and my people". He quickly rejoined : "That's why I say you may not like it. Perhaps I should say you may not appreciate it." O, beloved and revered Gurudeva, you indeed grasped the soul of my people and embraced the heart of my country ! My country and my people are really grateful to you and will ever remain so.

During this one full year since the demise of Gurudeva, I attempted to write something about him ; but till now I could not do it. The Sino-Indian Cultural Society in China wanted to publish a Tagore Memorial Book and asked me to write a number of articles, but neither have I written one of them. It was not only because I have been always heavily engaged by my humble duty and work during the whole year but also because I felt difficulty of writing on him and of expressing my deep feeling, sentiments and emotion towards him in figurative and, therefore, artificial words. Although I wrote a few short articles at the request of several editors of different magazines and newspapers in India, in none of them I wrote what I intended to write. Today is the first anniversary of his death. I just jot down a few of my thoughts about him and intend to publish them together with one or

two other short articles in pamphlet form as my humble but most sincere and earnest dedication to the world-beloved and revered and honoured Gurudeva Tagore !

Santiniketan,
August 7, 1942.

MY DEVOTION TO RABINDRANATH TAGORE*

The editor of the Bengali Women's Magazine has been so kind as to ask me to write something about Rabindranath Tagore for its special number to celebrate Rabindranath's 81st Birthday. What shall I write? I feel rather diffident. I cannot merely praise him, nor can I criticise him. For firstly, he is my Guru, and my eulogy and worship can best be kept in my heart and mind rather than be expressed in words; secondly, a man like him needs no verbal and superficial praise. He himself very often expressed that he is imperfect, but to me he is perfection personified. Then what shall I write and what can I write about him? But as I could not refuse the eager and earnest request of the editor, I shall simply pen a few words about my own devotion to him.

When he visited China in 1924, I was just coming out from my country. I could only meet him for the first time at Singapore in 1927. When I saw him, I immediately loved him and offered my humble self to him if he could make any use of me. But my admiration of him did not start there and then. Before that, I had watched all the news about him when he was in China and read all the speeches and lectures he delivered there. I had also read all the translations of his works

* Published in the "Bangalakshmi" a woman's magazine, in Bengali, April, 1941.

in Chinese and some of them in English. All these had inspired me very deeply. Moreover, being a student of Buddhism, I had a great love for India which was the cradle of Buddhism and had been regarded by the Chinese Buddhists for centuries as a heavenly kingdom. When I saw Rabindranath, I at once found in him the very representative and symbol of the Buddha's country.

Since my first stay at Santiniketan in 1928, I have continually read more about him and saw more of the things done by him. The more I read and saw, the greater became my admiration for him. Then I gradually devoted myself more and more to him as well as to the cause that he had undertaken. My own humble idea was that these two great sister nations, India and China, should be brought together once again in order to work for universal peace and human fraternity through their cultural contribution and co-operation. We should, on the one side, revive our old historical relationship which had unfortunately lapsed into isolation for centuries ; and on the other side, form new cultural contacts and friendship in the hope of bettering the present world, which is full of brutal hostilities and deadly conflicts ; if need be, only by showing an example of the amity and harmony existing between our two countries. Rabindranath Tagore has been the emblem of this hope and the focus of these ideas. I therefore devoted myself to him and made Santiniketan my second home. I do not think that my humble devotion can add anything to his greatness but I congratulate myself for having had the fortune,

opportunity and privilege of living near to him. Now, I am sitting at his feet and working under his spiritual guidance and leadership. He is not only the Gurudeva of Santiniketan and India but also the Gurudeva of humanity and the world.

Recently, quite recently, some unnecessary questions were put to me by some thoughtless people. I have been asked more than once by some Indian friends : "What do you think will become of Santiniketan when Rabindranath Tagore is no more ?" This was really a very sad, if not a very unfortunate, question and I felt very very sorry for it. I did not know how to answer but said to my questioners : "Dear friends, why should you ask me such a question and how can you ask me such a question ? Rabindranath Tagore may live hundred years and more. But he has to leave this world some day as all other human beings do and as all the other sages did in different times past. But his soul, his ideal, his works and his achievements will ever remain. The Lord Gautama Buddha passed away more than two thousand years ago, but his teachings still remain and will for ever remain in this world ; and those places where he was born, where he lived, preached and died, although only ruins today, are still great sacred spots for pilgrims from countries far and near. Today the Maha Bodhi Society is even going to establish an International Buddhist University at Sarnath, the spot where Lord Buddha turned the Chakra of Dharma for the first time.

Now, Rabindranath Tagore has himself founded the Santiniketan University of world-fame and reputation,

and he has breathed his life into it as Gandhiji once said. How can there be any doubt about its future, even when Rabindranath Tagore is physically no more ? Indeed, we should not think of such questions and such questions especially should not come out of the lips of our friends. We can only and should only pray for his long life and good health, and try our best to support the work that has been undertaken by him. As Mahatma Gandhi very recently appealed in the newspapers : “Indeed, the Gurudeva himself should command all the monetary help he needs. He has brought lustre to India. Many men have derived signal assistance from him and his institution. Their children are receiving instruction in Santiniketan. His art decorates many an Indian home. His poetry, his novels, plays and his art enrich the minds of thousands of boys and girls, men and women.” I should say that Gurudeva has brought lustre not to India alone but to the world at large. He has indeed given a new splendour to human history. His Asrama, the Santiniketan University has not only been an educational institution for Indian children but also a great centre of world culture and civilization. Therefore, we, especially Indian friends, should not think anything else about it, but try our best to help it, to support it and to develop it.

Lastly I may also tell my Indian friends, men and women, that in my daily morning and evening prayers, I do pray for Gurudev’s long life and sound health. I most sincerely hope all Indian friends, men and women, will do the same. On the auspicious occasion

of the 81st birthday of Gurudeva I would like to join with the Bengali women as well as all the Indian people twice to pray in this manner. May Gurudeva live with us for many years to come ! May Santiniketan become more and more prosperous and more and more successful !

*Visva-Bharati Cheena-Bhavana,
Santiniketan, 3-4-1941.*

RABINDRANATH, THE GURUDEVA*

Rabindranath Tagore needs no words of eulogy and praise from me. In fact I can hardly find out sufficient and suitable words which can be used either to describe him or to praise him adequately from my poor vocabulary. Human language is yet very often an insufficient instrument to express our ideas. Rabindranath Tagore has long been well-known to the world as the greatest poet of modern times. But, I think, he was much more and much greater than a mere poet. His songs are perhaps of greater emotional appeal to his own people than his poetry. His poetry undoubtedly rank with the rhymes of the other great poets of the world, not merely of today but also of the past. But there is hardly a match to his songs from the very beginning of civilisation up to now. Besides these he was also a great educationist, a great philosopher, a great novelist, a great dramatist, a great painter, a great singer, a great orator and what not. He could really be called "all in one", "all in all", and "all and all". To my humble self, he was more of a perfect saint and a supreme Gurudeva than anything else. He was and still is and will ever be, a supreme Gurudeva not only of Santiniketan and India but also of China and the whole world.

In China Rabindranath Tagore together with Mahatma Gandhi had long been regarded as the Buddhas of

* Published in the "Vishwa-Vani", March, 1942.

modern India. Rabindranath's visit to China in the year 1924 had been a great event in Chinese Cultural history. He had awakened the dormant conscience of the Chinese nation which had been intoxicated and doped by the modern splendours and glories of materialistic west for over a hundred years. It was this visit of Rabindranath Tagore that had given a momentous impetus to the new national movements of the awakening of China. China had conferred on him a Chinese name called "Chu Chen-Tan". "Chu" was the old Chinese name for India, also called "Tien-Chu", meaning heavenly kingdom. "Chen-Tan" was the old Indian name for China, according to a Buddhist book. "Chen" means thunder, "Tan" means sun-rise; "Chen-Tan" when put together, as in the old Indian name for China, it means the country that is situated where the sun rises, i. e. the Eastern Country. But here, as in the Chinese name for Rabindranath, it may be translated into English as "Thunder-Voiced Rising Sun". Therefore, "Chu Chen-Tan", with three characters joined together, has a double significance: first, the "Thunder voiced Rising Sun of India"; second, the "Symbol of Unity and Combination of India and China". Historians and Biographers may consider such a thing as merely a tiny trifle in Rabindranath's life. But it indicates China's love, respect, reverence and veneration for him. Immediately after his visit, there was formed the "New Crescent Moon Society" by the late young Chinese poet, Mr. Hsu Chih-mo and Dr. Hu Shih and other friends, just to commemorate this historical event. Later on the Sino-Indian Cultural Society initiated by

my humble self was joined by almost all the leading personalities and scholars and was founded entirely under his noble inspiration and it will surely ever remain as a concrete and living memory of his noble ideas.

I, my humble self, met the late Gurudeva for the first time in 1927 at Singapore. When he was visiting China in 1924, I was just coming out from my country. When I saw him, even for the first time, I immediately loved him. But my admiration of him did not just start from that time. Before that, I had watched all the news about him when he was in China and had read all the speeches and lectures he delivered there. I had also read all the few Chinese translations of his works and some of his English books too. All these inspired me very much. Moreover, being a student of Buddhism, I had naturally a great love for India which is the cradle of Buddhism and had been regarded, as above mentioned, by the Chinese people as a heavenly kingdom throughout past centuries. When I saw Rabindranath Tagore I found immediately in him the very representative and symbol of India. I came to Santiniketan for the first time, a year later in 1928. Since then I read more about him and saw more things done by him ; and gradually devoted myself more and more to him as well as to the cause which he had undertaken. My own humble idea was that these two great sister nations, India and China, should be brought together once again in order to work for universal peace and human fraternity through our cultural co-operation and contribution. We should,

on the one hand, revive our old historical contact which had unfortunately been lost for centuries ; and on the other hand, create a new cultural relation in the hope of bettering the present world which is full of brutal hostilities and deadly and atrocious conflicts, by showing an example of the amity and harmony of friendship between our two countries. Rabindranath Tagore, the Gurudeva, was exactly the emblem of this hope and the focus of these ideas. I, therefore, offered my humble self to him and worked under his auspices and guidance since then till the very end of his life. And I shall continue my devotion to him and work under his spiritual light till the very end of my life.

We all know and understand well that death is the natural consequence of life, and that death and life are necessities in Nature's course. One has come to live in this world, and one has to die in this world. There is nothing to be grieved at or mourned over. But this is merely philosophy. Human beings cannot live without feelings and sentiments. This has been specially evident in the death of the world-beloved Gurudeva, Rabindranath Tagore. Especially those of us who had personal contact with him, we cannot but feel deeply grieved and bereaved by his demise as Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru said in his condolence message to Sjt. Rathindranath Tagore, Gurudeva's only surviving son : "Gurudeva's passing away has left us all, who have grown up in the shadows of his towering genius and mighty personality and enveloped by his great tradition, forlorn and in the dark." Therefore, the whole of India mourned

for him ; nay, the whole world mourned for him too. But mere mourning will not be sufficient. Neither the holding of memorial services nor the publishing of special numbers of newspapers and magazines will be enough. Besides these, we should ever cherish in our hearts his ideas and principles and follow his very example in word, in deed and in mind. The most important inheritance he left to us and to the world is the Visva-Bharati University at Santiniketan, which is the very emblem and symbol of his ideas, ideals and life. It is, therefore, the duty not only of the people of Santiniketan but of the whole of India, nay, of the whole world to treasure, to maintain, to develop, to enlarge, to expand and to spread this important inheritance of ours. May I be allowed to take the liberty of quoting a few words of the two greatest personalities and the Gurudeva's two most affectionate friends in India, Mahatma Gandhi and Pandit Jawharlal Nehru, as my conclusion :—

“In Santiniketan, he has left a legacy to the whole nation, indeed to the whole world. May the noble soul rest in peace and may those in charge of Santiniketan prove worthy of the responsibilities resting on their shoulders.”—Mahatma Gandhi.

“That precious inheritance we shall treasure and I earnestly trust that every Indian will consider it his duty to help in the development and the growth of Santiniketan and Visva-Bharati which embody Gurudeva's ideals.”—Pt. Jawharlal Nehru.